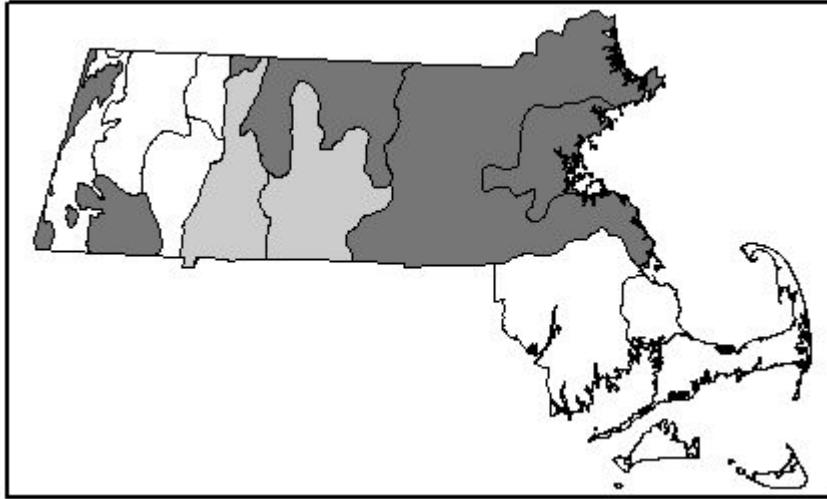


Community Name: ACIDIC ROCKY SUMMIT / ROCK OUTCROP

Community Code: CT2A1A0000

SRANK: S4



Concept: A widespread, open, community of low shrubs, scattered grasses, mosses, lichens and occasional trees found on rocky summits with exposed acidic bedrock or on rock outcrops where bedrock is acidic.

Environmental Setting: This community is found on rocky summits (balds) or ridge tops with exposed acidic bedrock or on rock outcrops derived from acidic bedrock. These areas are characteristically dry, with little or no soil and can often be found as open patches within the ridge-top pitch pine or dry, mixed oak communities. Although it can be found on flat surfaces, it is more typically found on steep slopes with aspects varying from SE through SW. Vegetation is concentrated around the edges or is found in pockets of soil within the outcrop. Ridgetop Pitch Pine / Scrub Oak Communities, or other ridgetop communities are often around the open patches of the Acidic Rocky Summit / Rock Outcrop Community. Examples of the Acidic Rock Cliff Community may occur below rocky summits, sometimes with intervening ridgetop or other forest/ woodlands.

Vegetation Description: Low shrubs and scattered clumps of grass dominate this community. Vegetation is discontinuous. The exposed rocks often have extensive patches of lichen and moss. Canopy cover is largely absent but trees commonly found near the margin of the bedrock areas include pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), and red oak (*Quercus rubra*), and may also include Red Pine (*Pinus resinosa*) native in this habitat. The dominant shrubs include scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), early sweet blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*), low sweet blueberry (*V. angustifolium*), black chokecherry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), and dwarf serviceberry (*Amelanchier stolonifera*). Dwarf chestnut oak (*Q. prinoides*) can also be found, but not as commonly. Herbaceous species include little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), poverty grass (*Danthonia spicata*), common hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), pale corydalis (*Corydalis sempervirens*), and cow wheat (*Melampyrum lineare*).

Associations:

Habitat Values for Associated Fauna: Most animals of rock outcrop communities are not sensitive to the chemistry of the rock, but rather are responding to the elevation and dryness of the habitat. Any differences in resident fauna between calcareous and acidic outcrops are most likely due to geographical differences in species distribution rather than to qualitative differences among the types of outcrops. Outcrops tend to be fairly small, and only a part of the habitat of most vertebrate animals. Small mammals of rock outcrop communities include those of dry habitats such as white footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*), red-backed vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*), short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*) and, in grassy / sedgy areas with some soil accumulation, meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). Snakes would be those of dry areas, such as black racer (*Coluber constrictor*), ringneck (*Diadophis punctatus*), and redbelly snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*). No turtles, frogs or toads would be expected. Ravens (*Corvus corax*) are all around high elevations, especially near cliffs where they nest.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Associated Rare Plants:

NONE KNOWN

Associated Rare Animals:

ERORA LAETA

EARLY HAIRSTREAK

T

**Examples with
Public Access:**

Mt. Everett State Reservation -- Mt. Washington; Mt. Greylock State Reservation. -- Williamstown;
Mt. Tekoa WMA -- Westfield/Russell; Blue Hills Reservation -- Milton.

Threats:

The major threat is probably the use of the areas as viewpoints. This can destroy the vegetation by trampling. The larger and steeper areas where the community occurs are probably stable and not likely to be overgrown by trees. Smaller areas may be overgrown during succession.

Management Needs:

Build trails to avoid these areas and/or educate the public so they understand how to protect the fragile areas. Controlled burns may be useful in keeping areas open.

Synonyms

USNVC/TNC:

In part Vaccinium (angustifolium, myrtilloides, pallidum) dwarf -Shrubland Alliance -- Vaccinium angustifolium - Sorbus americana Dwarf - Shrubland [CEGL005094]; Danthonia spicata Herbaceous Alliance (possible, no associations defined for New England); Pinus strobus- Quercus (alba, rubra) wooded herbaceous Alliance -- Pinus strobus - Quercus rubra / Danthonia spicata Acid Bedrock Wooded Herbaceous Vegetation [CEGL005101]; in part Pinus rigida Woodland Alliance -- Pinus rigida /Aronia melanocarpa / Deschampsia flexuosa - Schizachyrium Woodland [CEGL006116].

MA (old name):

SNE Acidic Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community.

ME:

Includes : 2001 - Three-toothed Cinquefoil - Blueberry Low Summit Bald. 1991 - In part, Acidic summit Community.

NH:

Part of: Appalachian oak- pine Rocky ridge Woodlands/ barren; Southern Acidic Rocky Summit Community and Oak - Pine Rocky Summit Woodland Community.

VT:

Temperate Acidic Outcrop Community; and in part - Boreal Outcrop Community.

NY:

In part - Rocky summit grassland; Successional Blueberry heath.

CT:

Includes: Schizachyrium scoparium - Danthonia spicata Grasslands - rock summits -- S. scoparium/ Prunus pumila var. cuneata community; and S. scoparium/ Hypericum gentianoides Community. [ridgetops].

RI:

Not described.

Weatherbee:

In part, Southern Acidic Rocky Summit.

Author:

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Date:

3/28/00

modified PCS